

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 16

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
21 August 1980

## U.S. Nuclear Missiles May Be Vulnerable To Soviets, Brown Says in Reassessment

By WALTER S. MOSSBERG

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON — America's land-based nuclear missile force may already be vulnerable to a Soviet missile attack, Defense Secretary Harold Brown disclosed, in a departure from earlier assessments.

Just seven months ago, in his annual report on U.S. defenses, Mr. Brown predicted that the Soviets would attain the capability to destroy many or most of America's 1,000 Minuteman missiles "within a year or two." But in a speech prepared for delivery in Newport, R.I., the Defense Secretary declared, "That potential has been realized, or close to it."

Pentagon officials argued that the new, gloomier assessment, which was derived from recent U.S. intelligence reports, advances by only a few months, at most, the long-expected onset of a period of U.S. missile vulnerability.

But the disclosure could hand a powerful political weapon to Republican presidential nominee Ronald Reagan, who is campaigning on a charge that President Carter has allowed the Soviets to surpass the U.S. militarily.

### Reagan's Evaluation

The admission may also undermine the President's claim that his Republican opponent exaggerates U.S. defense deficiencies and that Mr. Reagan's election would thus pave the way for a new arms race, and possibly, for war.

In his speech, at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Secretary Brown strongly defended the Carter record. He confirmed press reports that the President has recently "refined" U.S. nuclear strategy in order better to deter the Russians from "limited" nuclear attacks such as strikes against the vulnerable Minuteman missiles. And he also hailed Mr. Carter's plan to build the mobile MX missile and other new nuclear weapons as a way of solving the vulnerability problem.

A similar theme is likely to be struck by the President himself throughout the campaign, and may be repeated as early as today, when Mr. Carter is scheduled to address the convention of the American Legion in Boston.

### "Window of Vulnerability"

But the Republicans accuse the President of going forward too slowly with the MX missile, and of missing other opportunities to shorten the widely predicted "window of vulnerability" for the land-based U.S. nuclear strike force. One of those missed opportunities, in the Republicans' view, was Mr. Carter's 1977 decision to cancel the B1 bomber.

William Van Cleave, a key defense adviser to Mr. Reagan, charged that the speech by Mr. Brown displayed "the utter confusion of the administration's strategic thinking." He asserted, "In the same speech in which he lays out the new strategy, Mr. Brown writes off as vulnerable the one part of our strategic force accurate enough to carry it out."

In his own address to the American Legion convention yesterday, written before Mr. Brown's disclosure, Mr. Reagan declared: "Our nuclear deterrent forces must be made survivable as rapidly as possible to close the window of vulnerability before it opens any wider."

### The Arsenal

The land-based nuclear missiles, including the Minuteman and a small force of 54 Titan missiles, carry only about a fourth of the U.S. total of 9,200 nuclear warheads. The others are deployed in airborne bombers and aboard missile-firing submarines. But the land-based warheads are generally considered the speediest and most accurate in the U.S. arsenal.

Secretary Brown and others in the Carter administration have argued, however, that U.S. bombers and especially submarines remain highly survivable against Soviet forces for now. Thus, they say, there is enough force to overcome any Soviet temptation to mount a preemptive attack on the land-based missiles. They say this is reinforced by Mr. Carter's restatement of U.S. nuclear strategy.

The new statement of nuclear strategy, known as presidential directive 59, was signed last month, and leaked in fragmentary form to several newspapers soon thereafter. The stories caused debate in Washington and condemnation from the Soviet Union.

### Aims at Flexibility

The Defense Secretary said the directive is a "refinement, a codification," of a long-evolving U.S. strategy. That strategy, he said, aims at giving the President the flexibility to respond to any Soviet nuclear attack in a variety of ways other than by simply unleashing all of America's nuclear might at once to obliterate most Soviet cities, factories and bases.

Pentagon officials explain that U.S. analysts fear some Soviet military leaders might be willing to gamble that a "limited" Russian nuclear attack on remote U.S. missile silos, or bases in Europe, that killed fewer people than an all-out nuclear onslaught, would leave a president unwilling to order total destruction of the Soviet Union. Further, some Soviet military writings suggest that, through a protracted exchange of such "limited" strikes, the side that lost less military power could "win."

Mr. Brown declared: "It is our policy to ensure that the Soviet leadership knows that if they chose some intermediate level of aggression, we could, by selective, large (but still less than maximum) nuclear attacks, exact an unacceptably high price in the things the Soviet leaders appear to value most." These things are, he said, "political and military control, military force both nuclear and conventional, and the industrial capability to sustain a war."

### Range of Retaliation

He stressed that the U.S. "will keep a survivable and enduring capacity to attack the full range of targets, including the Soviet economic base," if such all-out retaliation is called for. But, he said, the new directive "conveys to the Soviets that any or all of the components of Soviet power can be struck in retaliation, not only their urban-industrial complex."

This threat, he said, should convince Soviet leaders "that any notion of victory in nuclear war is unrealistic," because it places in jeopardy the very parts of Soviet society—mainly the political and military systems—whose survival is the key to the Soviet definition of "victory."

He declared that even "limited" nuclear war "would involve immense casualties and destruction" and said it would likely escalate to a full-scale nuclear war that would be "an unimaginable catastrophe."

He insisted, however, that planning for the actual fighting of a nuclear war helps the U.S. to deter one, "by ensuring that our ability to retaliate is fully credible."